



## Library closure starts May 28

By JANE McCLURE and  
TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

The Hamline Midway Library building will check out its last book on May 27 and close on May 28, 2023. The historic building will be demolished and replaced with a new structure. Once closed, staff will move books and materials into storage, and begin removing other items over the next few months. Construction on the new building is expected to begin this fall and take up to 18 months.

St. Paul Public Library (SPPL) invites community members to check out books, DVDs, and more from Hamline Midway Library shelves and keep them for the duration of construction and return them to the shelves once the new library opens.

The SPPL Bookmobile will continue to make stops in the Hamline Midway neighborhood, including at Hamline Hi-Rise, Victoria/West Nevada, Lyngblomsten Apartments senior residence, and a new weekly stop at Hamline Hancock Recreation Center.

Library administration sent out the notice on May 4 about the upcoming closure. While that will please those who want a new facility, it will disappoint others who fought hard to save and renovate the current library.

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"It is a travesty on so many levels that we have gotten to this point, given there are multiple win-wins for the community, including a renovation design commissioned by the city or a relocation of the library, something that has never been seriously considered but would serve the community better on a number of levels," said Jonathan Oppenheimer of Renovate 1558. (Photo by Terry Faust)

## Sepak Takraw of USA formed by St. Paul man, team wins gold at World Cup in South Korea



Ker Cha, one of the team members that went to South Korea, practices at Frogtown Community Center. (Photos by Terry Faust)

## It all started in a refugee camp

By JAN WILLMS

Gao Chang likes to play volleyball and soccer. But the sport that has captured his heart is sepak takraw, a game with three team members on each side of a net using any part of their body except their hands to get a synthetic plastic ball over the net.

Chang started playing in a refugee camp in Thailand when he was 11. "As

young kids, we watched our older brothers play, and we would jump in just for fun," he said. "Later on I got to love the sport." So much so that he founded Sepak Takraw of USA (STUSA) in St. Paul in 2014 with Xai Tsa Pha. "From there we recruited Lee Pao Xiong and Txiabeng Vang. We started here, but cover the whole USA."

The origins of the game go far back in history. "There are two stories of where it started," Chang said. "One story is that Chinese soldiers started kicking a ball

made of bamboo and chicken feathers back and forth. In the early 1900s teams were formed with a net. Another story says the origins were in Malaysia."



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## WHY THROW AWAY A HOUSE WHEN PARTS CAN BE REUSED?

**Better Futures Minnesota helps deconstruct homes to make way for new projects and avoid landfills.**

By MARGO ASHMORE

From early 20th Century thrift to building cabins from contractor cast-offs, reuse of building materials had long been

an informal norm. But in a more recent world, entire houses have been thrown in the trash to make way for new construction. Landfills, many of them not lined to contain harmful chemicals, are filling up with construction debris, 90 percent of which is from demolition.

When James and Libby Wilson decided to open up their back porch, they wanted to pass along or recycle the materials. "We started the project, then realized we needed help," said Libby. James is a

carpenter and employee owner at Terra Firma, 2350 Territorial Road in the Midway. Terra Firma had worked with Better Futures Minnesota to salvage parts of houses they would remodel. "All our experiences with Better Futures have been positive," James said. "There was no doubt who we were going to call when it came to our house. It's great that there is such a considerate deconstruction and salvage operation in the Twin Cities."

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Rafiki Coffee focuses on building community with each cup of java

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Rondo Community Library children's area revamped

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Elsa's House of Sleep founder: 'It's never too late to start dreaming'

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## SEPAK TAKRAW

>> From 1

### TWO GOLD MEDALS

Last year Chang received an invitation from the International Sepak Takraw Federation to put a team together and participate in the World Cup in South Korea. He had a month and a half to put a team together.

"I talked to the president and vice president of our organization, and they said we should do it. I called Jeremy Mirken, a board member, and we started preparing to get a team together. These were all good, skilled players from Texas, California, Iowa, Nebraska, Indiana and Minnesota."

Two weeks before their departure for South Korea, the team played together for the first time at a tournament Chang put on in St. Paul. "We put people in their positions, and with Jeremy as coach, we went to South Korea in November. We won gold in two divisions. It was an honor and a good experience to play against other countries."

Countries participating included Germany, Vietnam, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and Japan.

### HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

Chang said that for international competition, the game can be played with teams of two, three and four. Teams also can play coed. He said the balls kicked back and forth in sepak takraw are the original black-lined one, which is harder but lasts longer. There is a very soft purple ball for kids, a softer red ball for female players, and a yellow ball for males. The yellow ball is usually used in tournaments.

In a typical three-member team, there is a server who gets the first ball, a feeder who feeds the ball and a spiker who kicks the ball over the net. The ball can be



Watching sepak takraw in action, aspects of soccer, volleyball, badminton and hackey sack come to mind. (Photo by Terry Faust)

touched three times with the feet, knees, chest or head of a player. If the ball touches the hand or arm, it is considered handball.

Watching the game in action, aspects of soccer, volleyball, badminton and hackey sack come to mind. Chang said if a player is good enough, he can keep the ball to himself before sending it over the net, but that is considered a selfish form of play.

"Spiking skill takes time," Chang said. "Flexibility is number one. It takes a long

time of practice. When I was younger, I did spiking. There are many out there who can do all kinds of tricks, and are very talented."

Spikers can leap in the air, kick the ball over the net and fall to the floor, only to bounce up right away ready to play. But Chang said there are a lot who do get injured. "Some land in the wrong position and can get a sprained ankle or injure their shoulder," he noted. "If you don't land properly, you can injure any part of your body. But if you train you won't get injured."

Chang said players can train for spiking by kicking at a hanging ball. "You can start kicking from a lower level and adjusting the ball higher. That is how you train for

spiking," he said. "For serving, you start on a lower level and go up."

### IT CAN BE PLAYED ANYWHERE

According to Chang, sepak takraw can be played anywhere. "In the refugee camp, we played on dirt," he said. "It can be played outside in the park, on grass. Or indoors on a court."

He said there are outdoor courts in the area. "In summer, we practice almost every night at the court at Duluth and

Case. That place is always packed." Chang said there are also two courts at Marydale Park and the Frogtown Community Center (230 Como Avenue). Rice Rec Center at 1021 Marion also has courts. Over the winter, some players cleared the snow and were playing outside the Frogtown Community Center.

The game has no age limits. Many people in their 70s play the game for exercise. Chang said professionally, the best age is between 18 and just under 30. "They have more energy, but in the real world, anyone can play."

There are limited rec centers in the Twin Cities where the game is played, but Chang said the organization is recruiting females to join the team. Although the current players are all Southeast Asian, he said he hopes the sport will bring in everyone. "If we got some 6-foot players, since the net is set at 5 feet, that would be great for us," he said.

Chang is stepping down as secretary of the Sepak Takraw of USA group, but he will continue coaching teens. As a deputy sergeant for the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department, he coaches youth in sepak takraw. "It is part of our youth program and crime prevention unit," he said. "We see car jackings and auto theft, and we don't want that. We just want to make sure the kids get along with law enforcement. And hopefully when these kids grow up they can participate internationally."

Chang is excited at the possibility that sepak takraw may be introduced as an Olympic sport in the 2026 Summer Olympics.

One thing he is hoping for is that the St. Paul Parks and Rec Department and the City of Saint Paul can add additional light poles at the courts at Case and Duluth so that people can play until 11 p.m.

"Some work and come late, so they don't have that long to play," Chang said. "We already applied and got rejected by the mayor, but this is for the whole community."

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## LIBRARY CLOSURE >> From 1

On May 4, several dozen area residents gathered to speak about their desire to preserve the building and to give it a symbolic hug.

"Proponents of preservation have been repeatedly ignored during the past three years, with no acknowledgment by city officials of the community's widespread support for preservation – as evidenced by dozens of pro-preservation comments in 2021 during the CIB funding process, thousands of signatures on online petitions urging that the library be saved and renovated, and the hundreds of people who showed up at information sessions and rallies to advocate for preservation," stated Renovate 1558, a group dedicated to preserving the Henry Hale Memorial Library building.

Beth Burns, president of The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library, said, "We are thrilled to see this project move forward as part of a holistic vision to transform libraries across Saint Paul. We represent thousands of library lovers who donate and advocate on behalf of our library system so that each branch can be a welcoming, safe, joyful, and inspiring space for every person in Saint Paul."

### WELL-LOVED LIBRARY

The decision to close the library was announced May 4 along with renovation plans for the Hayden Heights and Riverview libraries were also announced on May 4, as part of the Transforming Libraries initiative.

Hamline Midway has had almost 3,000 people weigh in this year during discussions of the library's future through a series of virtual and in-person open houses, pop-up events, community meetings, and surveys. That's the most input among the three neighborhood branch libraries.

When the city undertook the Transforming Libraries initiative for Hamline Midway, Hayden Heights and Riverview, staff and consultants talked to library users about what they want and need in library facilities, said former St. Paul Public Library Director Catherine Penkert.

Penkert described all three libraries as "well loved, well used and well worn." The library had not seen significant improvements in many years. Transforming the libraries means reimagining their spaces for today's and future users.

Part of the vision that emerged for the three branch libraries is to see them as neighborhood resilience centers, places with many uses and resources for their neighbor.

For Hamline Midway, four options were presented earlier. Those were narrowed to two, one for building renovation and expansion, and the other for a new building on the current site at 1558 Minnehaha Ave. The options are within an \$8.1 million budget.

The option of a new building was chosen over expanding and renovating the current structure. The new library would have 9,400 square feet, which is 5,200 square feet more than the existing building. The renovation option would have meant a facility of 6,200 square feet, or 2,000 square feet more than the current building.

In a statement, Renovate 1558 group members said: "We, at Renovate 1558, are saddened but not surprised that the St. Paul Public Library (SPPL), with the support of Mayor Carter, Council member Jalali, and the Friends of the Saint Paul Library, continue their push to senselessly – and needlessly – demolish the Hamline Midway Library, which three months ago was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). As we've documented extensively, there was a coordinated, secretive, and dishonest campaign by SPPL from day one to push through this demolition, actions that completely disrespect the will of the community and the city's own comprehen-



(Left to right) Jonathan Oppenheimer, Barbara Bezat, and Tom Goldstein of Renovate 1558 speak about Hamline Library's renovation progress on Thursday, May 5, 2023. Cake and refreshments followed the update. (Photo by Terry Faust)

sive plan, which stresses the importance of preserving historic public buildings. ...

"Suggesting that demolition is the only available choice is a travesty, given that the city itself commissioned a renovation option that would preserve, modernize, and expand the existing building. Additionally, city officials have refused to consider a relocation of the library, possibly adjacent to the Hancock Recreation Center, an option that would better serve the community on a number of levels, including the possibility of repurposing the existing library rather than knocking it down. Preservation rather than building anew is also the far better environmental choice, the more cost-effective alternative, and the option that best represents the wishes of community members.

"Clearly, demolition is the most divisive option."

### ACCESSIBILITY AND HISTORY

Two strong themes heard at Hamline Midway were those of access and equity, Penkert said. That will mean moving most library functions to one level and having the main entrance be fully accessible. She called accessibility "absolutely critical" when looking at building design, saying neighborhood residents who use wheelchairs or have mobility issues have been unable to use the library.

The final design for a new Hamline Midway Library includes features such as an outdoor reading garden, an interactive children's area for learning through play, a teen area, study rooms, two community meeting rooms, a wellness room, and

space to feature public art that connects the library to the variety of cultures represented in the Hamline Midway neighborhood. The one-story layout maximizes accessibility and provides additional safety with low shelving, strong sightlines, and all amenities on one floor.

A preserved stone arch entryway and cornerstone will lead to a meeting room, salvaged brick will be incorporated in the interior, and salvaged wood from the stage will be used in the community room. The existing mosaic above the fireplace will go above a new sustainable fireplace. The diamond brick pattern discovered in the existing library's original 1929 draft documents will now provide a unique look to the new library's exterior.

"We are deeply committed to building a new Hamline Midway Library that will allow us to equitably serve everyone in our community, especially those who are not currently using the library," said Interim Library Director Maureen Hartman.

### COULD THINGS HAVE BEEN DONE DIFFERENTLY?

When asked if anything could have been done differently during the Hamline Midway Branch Library planning process, Penkert cited the pandemic as a challenge to seeking continued neighborhood input. Library administration presented plans for Transforming Libraries to city council members in early March 2020, just before everything shut down. Ways to engage community members had to change.

"There was no roadmap," Penkert said. She gives credit to library staff and community members for participating in a

Community members voice their support for keeping the historic Henry Hale Memorial Library building, also known as the Hamline Midway Library. It was officially designated on the National Registrar of Historic Places on Jan. 31, 2023 but that is not stopping the city from demolishing the structure. (Photo by Terry Faust)

lot of engagement events.

The challenges in gathering input were weighed against the need to make library improvements, and meet timing of the city's Long-Range Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) process itself. Had the libraries' request been delayed, that would have meant a wait of at least two more years, she pointed out.

"This important new community resource represents four years of listening to community members to shape the vision of a space for families and children. The Midway neighborhood has endured significant challenges while remaining one of the places in the city with the fastest-growing population of kids and families," said council member Mitra Jalali. "This critical city investment is long overdue."

### HISTORY OF LIBRARIES

What began as the Hamline Library opened in October 1930 after years of neighborhood activism to get it built. The lots it was built on were purchased thanks to neighborhood donations, in 1922. But delays on the city's part and litigation involving the Hale estate took time.

Hamline was one of the city's two Henry Hale Memorial Branch libraries. The other, in Merriam Park, was built in 1930 and replaced in the early 1990s due to unstable soils.

Hamline has also had foundation problems. More than \$400,000 has been spent over the past 4.5 years to try to fix water infiltration problems. The building was officially designated a National Registrar of Historic Places site on Jan. 31, 2023. The listing does not preclude SPPL from moving forward with a new library.

The other two libraries will be renovated. Hayden Heights, which opened in 1979, will benefit from interior and exterior renovations that including adding large windows on its White Bear Avenue side. It also will gain outdoor green space, off of its children's area.

Riverview, a Carnegie Library built in 1916, will have an addition built on its west end. The building will have exterior and interior renovations, with main uses on one floor. Its front steps will be turned into a reading plaza where people can read or use their devices to work and study. Outdoor programming space will also be enhanced. Penkert noted that one lesson of the pandemic is the need for outdoor learning and activity spaces at libraries.



Join the conversation, and let us know your diverse and varied thoughts on the issues that affect your neighborhood. Send letters and guest commentaries to [tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com](mailto:tesha@MonitorSaintPaul.com).

# CELEBRATING TEACHERS AND LEARNING

## PLANTING SEEDS

BY DR. ARTIKA TYNER,  
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The month of May is the time to celebrate. There is an opportunity to honor teachers and recognize the importance of reading. We each can play a vital role in supporting our children's education. This is affirmed by the proverb: "It takes a village to raise a child."

Here are a few strategies you can use to celebrate learning throughout the month of May:

### CELEBRATE CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK MAY 1 - 7

The more children read, the greater their capacity to learn and make a difference in the world will be. Reading is a key building block of learning. However, the major question many educational leaders are exploring is: how to cultivate an environment where children discover joy in reading? One of the main ways to accomplish this is by bringing awareness to the importance of reading and using children's books to support learning.

Children's Book Week was inspired by Franklin K. Matthews, the librarian of

the Boy Scouts of America. In 1913, after discovering new knowledge about engaging children through reading. He served as a key advocate for creating high-quality children's books. He decided to dedicate a whole week to creating an enriching learning experience through reading for children across the nation. Mr. Matthews' hard work yielded positive results as evidenced by the official launch of Children's Book Week in 1919. This year will be the 104th Anniversary of the momentous occasion of motivating children to read and lead.

### CELEBRATE FLOYD COOPER DAY MAY 5, 2023

Floyd Cooper was an award-winning children's book illustrator. His illustrations focused on honoring African American culture and history. For over 30 years, his artistry has captured the essence of Black life. His illustrations illuminate the beauty of Blackness and the strength of the Black community.

His legacy lives on through classrooms, homes, and libraries around the world. When children see his artistry, they are motivated to learn more about African American history. Notable books illustrated by Mr. Cooper include: "Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre," "Juneteenth for Mazie," "Jump!," and "A Day for Rememberin': Inspired by the True Events of the First Memorial Day."



Dr. Artika Tyner and author Anthony Walsh (Photo submitted)

### CELEBRATE NATIONAL TEACHER APPRECIATION MAY 8 - 12

Teachers are key to supporting children on their learning journey. They support students in building their self-esteem, developing critical thinking skills, and reaching their dreams. Data shows 88% of people indicate a teacher had a significant, positive impact on their life.



Teachers can have a positive impact both inside and outside the classroom. They serve as trusted advisors and mentors. They reach an average of 3,000 students during their careers.

This month, you can support literacy by helping to organize a book drive for a local school or volunteering at the library. You can support teachers by volunteering at the Kids in Need Foundation in Roseville which provides free school supplies to 1,000 local teachers, totaling \$1M in supplies.

Through her organization, Planting People Growing Justice Leadership Institute, Dr. Artika Tyner seeks to plant seeds of social change through education, training, and community outreach.

## Soak up summer at local festivals

### BUILDING A STRONGER MIDWAY

BY CHAD KULAS,  
Midway Chamber of  
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Not to jinx us, but I actually think spring is here. That's right, I'm calling it. Put the winter boots and shovel away! The bad news is it seems like spring is too short. We can go from scraping our windshields to sweating out a t-shirt quickly, and almost go past the mild days of this in-between season. But the good news is we love taking advantage of the warm weather in Minnesota and there are a lot of fun activities happening around our neighborhood. Here are some in the upcoming months.

On Memorial Day weekend the Minnesota State Fair does its now annual Summer Kickoff. This was one of the good things that started as a result of the pandemic and is sticking around. From Thursday to Sunday you can enjoy the miniature version of the Great Minnesota Get-Together minus the enormous crowds as attendance is capped off each day. You can still enjoy rides, live music, food and drink many of your favorite fair activities.

For the first time since 2019, Grand Old Day is back! On Sunday, June 4, you can meander down to Grand and enjoy

the parade and food vendors. Rising security costs and the pandemic took a toll on many festivals, and it's a good sign this one is returning.

Looking for a good old-fashioned 4th of July parade? If you're in Saint Paul, the only one to find is the St. Anthony Park "4th in the Park" festival. The parade goes down Como Avenue, and features many of the businesses that give St. Anthony Park its smalltown feel. The day concludes in Langford Park with music and dancing 4-6 p.m.

The Little Africa Festival is also back, once again closing off Snelling Avenue north of University. The event is held in Hamline Park and on Snelling Avenue, with food, crafts, live performances, and a parade. Little Africa Festival will be held Sunday, Aug. 6, and appears to get bigger each year. Expect opportunities to engage with neighbors and learn about African cultures.

It may arrive at the very end of summer, but Chroma Zone returns Sept. 14-16. The festival, put on by the Creative Enterprise Zone, annually showcases new murals placed on many buildings in the area designated as the Creative Enterprise Zone. After this year's murals, there will be over 60 in the CEZ. While the three-day festival itself can boast activities beyond the murals, people can take self-guided tours anytime and they can download a map of the murals from the Chroma Zone website.

As everyone soaks up the warmth, there will be many opportunities to enjoy the weather. And you don't need an official reason like a festival or parade. Make a point to visit a patio of your favorite coffee shop/restaurant/taproom and more this summer. Take in a Minnesota United or St. Paul Saints game. Enjoy the warm weather when it arrives, and the added jubilation within the community.

## Letter

### I SUPPORT CHANGES TO ZONING TO ALLOW FOR MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

Saint Paul is currently in Phase 2 of changing our zoning laws to allow for more duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes on lots that are currently only zoned for single-family homes. I know the idea of higher density rental units in neighborhoods can be a little scary for folks who are adverse to change within their

communities they love dearly. However, this change in zoning laws is addressing community change that has already taken place.

Our neighborhoods and downtown have exploded in population density by 2.55% since the last census year and 7.1% since the year 2000. Unfortunately our options for affordable, family-centric housing options have NOT grown at that scale. Aside from downtown luxury apartment units that have been constructed, options for families who cannot afford purchasing single-family homes are increasingly

limited. Due to many factors including the economic and housing crisis we are experiencing, the timing of the zoning law changes could not be more critical.

We MUST ensure that Saint Paul families have options within our city for safe, affordable, and sustainable housing options in our city. The creation of more multi-family housing units will ensure that families who would otherwise be displaced by rising rental prices or the inability to purchase homes have a place to live and brighten their communities overall.

More housing options like the pro-

posed has direct positive impacts such as lowering crime rates, lowering the rate of families currently living in doubled-up situations, increasing longevity due to health benefits, and overall improving the quality of life for Saint Paulites who have called this land home for years. I, for one, am so excited to welcome new neighbors to my community and see the positive impact the zoning changes have on the quality of our neighborhoods and the relationships our city has with its residents.

Lauren McCabe  
Como

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News for you!

The Midway Como Frogtown Monitor is a monthly community publication in the Midway, Como, Hamline and Frogtown neighborhoods of St. Paul, owned and operated by TMC Publications, CO. Visit our website for our calendar and publication dates.

### Story ideas always welcome.

Keep in touch with the Monitor. Letters to the editor under 200 words and news releases for publication can be sent via e-mail to [tesha@monitorsaintpaul.com](mailto:tesha@monitorsaintpaul.com). Unsigned letters will not run.

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# AAPI Heritage Month event tries to envelop the decades

Theater Mu's conference centers Asian American stories, theater, and social justice May 19-21

## GUEST COLUMN

BY LIANNA MATT MCLERNON,  
Theater Mu marketing and communications director



In 1992, Theater Mu was founded in St. Paul to tell stories from the heart of the Asian American experience, and now, we are in the middle of celebrating our 30th anniversary season. Four world premieres inspired or created by local artists made up our mainstage line-up, but we wanted to add an event that honored the people who created the foundations for Asian American theater. Thus, the AAPI Generations Conference was born.

The event takes place May 19-21, 2023 in St. Paul and brings together local and national Asian American arts leaders, community organizations, and artists. Highlights include an opening conversation with playwright David Henry Hwang, actor Amy Hill, and Mu co-founder Rick Shiomi; a play reading that reflects on seminal works by six of Asian American theater's

trailblazers; and a conversation led by More Than a Single Story that brings together Lana Salah Barkawi of Mizna, Ananya Chatterjea of Ananya Dance Theatre, and Mu's leaders Lily Tung Crystal and Anh Thu T. Pham.

It's a lot to pack in one weekend – and that's not including the other performances or community-led breakout sessions – but as the staff reflected on what a national Asian American theater reunion looked like, this was the only way we could picture it.

Since the beginning, Theater Mu's mission has been intertwined with social justice, so of course it made sense to hold space for discussions on representation, combating AAPI hate, and disrupting the gender binary. We are a theater that finds its origins in waving down Asian Americans on the street to ask if they want to become actors, so of course we commit to spotlighting newer works (this year's readings being "House of Joy" by Madhuri Shekar and "Holy Shitake: A Wok Star Is Born" by Katie Chin, daughter of the late restaurateur Leann Chin).

We also remember that we only thrived because of our community's spirit of abundance. To this, we pay tribute to the arts-based activism organization Asian American Renaissance, and we welcome

other arts organizations such as Wattanak Dance Troupe and TaikoArts Midwest, both of whom are holding small performances and panels during the conference.

The staff is so proud of everyone who is going to be a part of the AAPI Generations Conference, but as we look ahead to the 2023/24 theater season, we know there are many more stories to share. After 30 years, we're still only scraping the surface of experiences within our Asian American communities, and to truly tell them all, we need to be here for another 30 years, and another 30, and another, until the end of time.

And our stories need to be told, now more than ever. According to a report released in March this year, the FBI found a 167.4% increase in hate crimes (279 to 746) against Asian Americans from 2020 to 2021. From March 19, 2020, through March 31, 2022, the nonprofit Stop AAPI Hate noted that two thirds of the nearly 11,500 incidents it recorded involved harassment, with one in six incidents involving physical altercations. The multi-year report further notes that 40% of all incidents occurred in public spaces and that 27% took place in businesses such as grocery stores, pharmacies, or retail stores.

Art is a way to fight this hate, heal-

## AAPI GENERATIONS CONFERENCE

When: May 19-21, 2023

Where: Park Square Theatre, 20 W Seventh Place, St. Paul

Tickets: Pay As You Are at theatermu.org

ing and galvanizing those who create and consume it. Shiomi once said, "My theater work came out of my community activism, and became an extension of that activism. Being Asian American, there are so many hurdles to get across in terms of creating awareness and recognition of Asian American theater, wherever you go. Those two are, for me, wedded together completely."

Similarly, Tung Crystal says, "When those around us do not see us on stage, film, or television, they often perceive us as other. We at Mu know that the more we uplift our stories, the more we are part of the narrative of America. ... The key to universality is through specificity. The characters we champion must be full, real, and complicated, and only then can we inspire true empathy and understanding."

While the headlines may be more full than ever with Asian American triumphs – does "Everything Everywhere All at Once" ring a bell? – we hope to be part of a movement, not a moment. So please, join us at the AAPI Generations Conference as we honor the founders of Asian American theater who have made today's milestones possible, and dream with us as we consider what the future can hold.

## Vote delayed on Doge Pizza request

Business wants to deliver pizza until 6 a.m., neighbors complain about noise

By JANE McCLURE

Should a Hamline-Midway pizza restaurant be allowed to provide carry-out and delivery service overnight until 6 a.m.? That's a question the St. Paul Planning Commission's Zoning Committee will take up later this month, as the committee members consider a request from Doge Pizza, 629 Aldine St.

After almost two hours of debate, the committee laid the matter over until May 18. The committee is asking Doge Pizza owners Ahmed and Said Abdi and neighbors to meet with the Hamline Midway Coalition (HMC) Community Development Committee. Zoning committee members are hoping some sort of compromise can be found. The restaurant is a nonconforming use, in the middle of a residential neighborhood.

629 Aldine was built in 1915, with a storefront on the first floor and dwelling space above. For many years it housed a corner store.

By 1992, the storefront was vacant. That year the Planning Commission approved a permit for reestablishment of nonconforming use, which allowed a pizza delivery restaurant to open on the main floor. The property is zoned for residential use, but in this type of situation where a longtime property use predates

the modern zoning code, a use can stay with a permit and conditions.

A condition of approval was that the restaurant be closed between 12 a.m. and 8 a.m.

Different restaurants have operated in the storefront since 1992, including Cheney's, Eden Pizza and Eureka Vegan Compass. Doge moved into the space in 2021.

Since August 2021, several complaints have been filed with the city's Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) about noise generated by the building's hood/vent system. Neighbors have also complained about noise, trash and what a city staff report describes as "potential prohibited commercial sales activity."

The overnight pizza sales started earlier this year. Doge's owners said they didn't know they were in violation.

The owners indicated in one application to the city that they want to extend hours to 4 a.m. During the May 4 meeting, the suggestions was made that hours be extended to 6 a.m. Ahmed Abdi said the owners are struggling to keep the restaurant open, and that the early-morning sales have been a boon to business.

Senior City Planner Josh Williams recommended denial of the request to expand hours, citing the potential for additional commercial traffic in a residential area, and detriment to the character of a largely residential neighborhood.

"My analysis is that changing the hours expands the noise and traffic impacts in the neighborhood," Williams said.

HMC recommended approval at a recent meeting, but some neighbors said that meeting wasn't noticed properly. They also pointed out that Ahmed Abdi is a district council member and has a potential conflict of interest.

Action at the zoning committee level was delayed earlier this spring to allow HMC to weigh in. The district council could opt to not review the matter again, said Assistant City Attorney Peter Warner.

Commissioners said they want to see more community discussion. "What I see is a bunch of conflicting issues, which make it hard to make a decision," said zoning committee chair Jake Reilly. Others on the committee agreed, saying they're inclined to deny the request outright unless some kind of compromise can be reached.

"We are not profitable," Abdi said. The extended hours were tried without the restaurant owners being aware of the restrictions tied to the nonconforming use permit. The extended hours have boosted business and meet requests of neighbors wanting an overnight food option. The busiest time for business is 1-2 a.m.

While they sympathize with the challenges Doge has faced during the pandemic, commissioners are also concerned about impacts on neighbors, with vehicles coming and going at all hours.

While the zoning committee and ultimately the Planning Commission can vote on operating conditions for Doge as part of a change in nonconforming use, commissioners agreed that any property code issues have to go to the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI). One issue opponents have cited is noise from a ventilation/hood system. Abdi the hood system isn't operated overnight.

He also said his family has made significant investments to the Aldine building. They rent the space and do not own it.

Abdi said when his family took over the building, "it was a mess." There is still a need to replace the ventilation hood system, which could cost as much as \$100,000. He said the restaurant owners will seek a sales tax grant from the city.

The request to change hours got 34 letters of support, mainly from people who want food during the overnight hours. Abdi said about 70 percent of orders are for delivery, with 30 percent pick-up.

Opponents sent in 20 letters, with half a dozen testifying before the zoning committee.

Brian Mundy, who lives next door to Doge, said the owners won't deal with issues and won't work with neighbors. His family deals with the stress of vehicles pulling up and doors slamming, and headlights shining in their home's windows overnight.

Mundy said despite a warning from the city about violating the nonconforming use permit, Doge continued to operate in violation for a time.

Julie Hellwich is a longtime small business owner and neighborhood resident. While she understands the challenges small businesses are facing, she said the overnight hours put too much of burden on the neighborhood.

Five other neighbors testified in opposition, saying the overnight hours aren't compatible with a residential neighborhood, and that the Doge owners should have known what they were dealing with when they moved into the building. "This is not a good fit," said Teresa LePaine.

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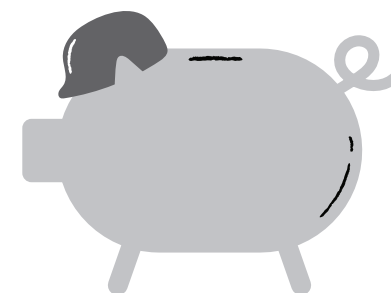


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## Production about power held over people by stories – and how they can be used to heal or hurt Applause Theater's latest show, 'Ending True' opens May 18

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

Applause Theater explores the power of family stories in its latest show, "Ending True," which runs May 18-21 at Dreamland Arts (677 Hamline Ave. N.).

"The play is about the power held over us by the stories we hear growing up, and the power we have to change those stories to heal," stated author Jim Lundy, who resides in west Como.

About the play: "Laura Tyndall is at the end of her rope. As her parents depart, can she keep the stories they've told – and one still untold? 'Ending True' affirms the redeeming power of stories to define and guide us: the factual and fictional, the inherited and those we create for ourselves."

Ninety-minute shows are 7 p.m. Thursday to Saturday, and 2 p.m. on Sunday. Regular tickets are \$20, and \$16 for students, teachers, seniors and veterans. Pay What You Want on Thursday, May 18.

More at <https://dreamlandarts.com/ending-true/>.



Brad Curoe plays Young Sam in the upcoming production of "Ending True" at Dreamland Arts (677 Hamline Ave. N.) (Photo by Jim Lundy)

Meet 'Ending True' script writer Jim Lundy:

### HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH APPLAUSE COMMUNITY THEATER?

Lundy: The first few shows that I wrote were either self-produced at the Minnesota Fringe Festival, or by a now-defunct theater company called Eat Street Players in Minneapolis. I met Amy Luedtke there when she was cast in an early version of "Broken Hill". Through Amy, I met Chad Snyder and Gary Davis, who have all been active in Applause Theater for some time. The first show I wrote that they produced was called "Bird Icon" in 2014, and they have produced numerous others since then.

### WHAT INSPIRED THIS PRODUCTION?

Lundy: Drama is often inspired by personal experience, and "Ending True" is no exception. In our middle and older-middle age, many of us confront the departures of our elders. The stories we tell ourselves take outsized importance during these times. The stories may be factually true – or not. The stories may heal us – or not. But in a strange way, we get to choose.

### HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT PUTTING THIS TOGETHER?

Lundy: The ideas, characters and sit-



In rehearsal are (left) Shannon Kennedy as Sam Tyndall and Nick Dibley as Tommy Tyndall. "I hope that some will relate to the tensions that inevitably arise when families are under stress," said script writer Jim Lundy about "Ending True." (Photo by Jim Lundy)

uations have been percolating for a long time. My wife, Sherryl, and I lost four family members over a stretch of a few years, and we had to disperse their belongings and homes. Now these family members only continue to exist as the stories we tell, which is a form of healing.

### WHAT DO YOU HOPE VIEWERS GET OUT OF THE SHOW?

Lundy: I hope that some will relate to the tensions that inevitably arise when families are under stress. I hope they will see one character as resilient, and that another is caught in a hopelessly tragic loop.

I hope that there are some laughs, and maybe some tears.

### HOW DO STORIES REDEEM AND DEFINE US?

Lundy: Kevin Kling, a Minnesota story-teller of note, insists that each time we tell a traumatic story, we place emotional distance between ourselves and the painful experience. In this way, the stories become the means of our healing. I think he's right. I hope our audience can recognize the opportunities our characters have to make that work.

Meet Zaraawar Mistry, co-founder and owner of Dreamland Arts (677 Hamline Ave. N.). The 40 seat theater, owned and operated by theater artists Mistry and Leslye Orr. The building used to be Hedtke Electric, an electrical contractor's shop. Mistry and Orr bought the property in 2005 and remodeled the building into an intimate, but well-equipped theater.

Mistry, known as "Z," makes sure that everything from production week through the final curtain goes smoothly for Applause Theater and others.

### HOW DREAMLAND ARTS GET STARTED?

In the early 2000s, Leslye and I had run a non-profit arts organization based in Minneapolis to help support independent artists who produce their own work. Eventually we decided that we should have our own theater, where we could live and work, and also operate as a privately owned business. We started looking for a place around the Twin Cities, and found the Hedtke Electric building on Hamline Ave. N., which we bought in 2005 and remodeled into Dreamland Arts. We live in the adjoining house.

### HOW HAVE THINGS CHANGED?

When we first started, we thought we would do a mix of events, meetings, class-

es and community programming, but at some point we realized that our space was best suited for small events. So we mostly focused on presenting plays, music and dance concerts, poetry readings, puppet shows and film screenings. Sometimes artists use our space for a video or photo shoot, or for rehearsals. Since we opened our doors in 2006, we have served the young and the old, next door neighbors and distant travelers, and pros and dabblers.

### HOW DID COVID-19 AFFECT YOU?

The COVID-19 shutdown was definitely unexpected and challenging, but being a small owner operated business with no employees helped. We had always been used to doing everything ourselves. Also, both my wife and I are solo writer-performers, so we were able to translate our existing work to the virtual realm fairly quickly. Government grants, such as the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, as well as the St. Paul Bridge Fund, helped us pay a portion of our bills. Also, I was fortunate that I have a job with Springboard for the Arts, which kept its staff employed during the pandemic.

### TELL US ABOUT YOUR COLLABORATION WITH APPLAUSE THEATER.

We have worked with many different local theater groups over the years. Some use our space for a few weeks for one show, and then we may not see them again. A lot of the groups keep coming back, if not every year, then every other year, or every few years. Applause Community Theater first rented our space for a show in...2013, maybe...and they kept coming back regularly. They were the only theater company that kept doing shows with us through the pandemic, experimenting with virtual performances, then live streaming, and then finally back to in-person. We have a very special relationship with them.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

After 17 years of running the theater, Leslye and I have decided to downsize and sell our house and theater (together considered one property by Ramsey County and attached via an underground passageway). Thank you for having been on this journey with us. We feel truly fortunate to have been able to welcome so many incredible artists and audiences over the years to our little corner of St. Paul.

We don't know exactly what we will be doing for the next phase of our artistic adventure, but we're very much looking forward to what's to come!



Amy Luedtke (left) as Laura Tyndall and Shannon Kennedy as Sam Tyndall. (Photo by Jim Lundy)

Meet actress and Applause Theater board member Amy Luedtke, who resides in northeast Minneapolis.

### PLEASE TALK ABOUT HOW YOU GOT INVOLVED WITH APPLAUSE COMMUNITY THEATER?

Luedtke: I started acting with Applause in 2010 and since then have also been involved in the planning and marketing of productions (I don't remember the year but I eventually became a Board member). I've played so many wonderful roles, many created by Jim Lundy, but one of my favorites was Sally in "Talley's Folly" by Lanford Wilson (a production that I got to co-star with Chad in!).

### WHAT INSPIRES YOU ABOUT THIS PRODUCTION?

Luedtke: On a personal level, my involvement in this production is strongly inspired by my own experience of my family telling and re-telling family stories to connect with each other and to remember our deceased family members. As my sister died just a few weeks ago, this feels especially important to me.

### WHAT DO YOU HOPE VIEWERS GET OUT OF THE SHOW?

Luedtke: I hope the audience is pulled into the lives of the characters, and that they recognize themselves and can identify with the characters, even though their own particular experiences may not be the same. I hope audiences feel affirmed by seeing others struggle with family stories and relationships, and that they are inspired to tell and think about their own stories. If I'm aiming big, I hope people are inspired to "re-write" and change any stories that are holding them back!

### HOW DO STORIES REDEEM AND DEFINE US?

Luedtke: As humans, we make meaning through stories. We create and maintain relationships through stories, including relationships with those who are no longer physically with us. Our stories can limit us and hold us back (something the characters in "Ending True" struggle with), or they can inspire us and give us the courage to try something new.



Brock Ray as Teej Tyndall. (Photo by Jim Lundy)



# Coffee shop focuses on building community

*Rafiki opens in Griggs Midway Building*

By TESHAM. CHRISTENSEN

The space in the Griggs Midway Building used to house Lucy's. Then it was Snack Chat. It had been empty for about four years when Ian Oundo looked at it.

He had dreamed about opening a restaurant near Allianz Field to match up his love of food with soccer.

While working for African Economic Development Solutions inside the Griggs Midway Building, he realized there were no food options for the workers there. One morning in May 2022, he walked into the Progressive Management Investments office and asked, "What would it take to get a restaurant going here?" For the next 1.5 hours, Oundo looked at the 900-square-foot space and asked questions. They began working out the details and he said that he'd take the space.

It was a pivotal moment for Oundo, and one he returns to. "What if she had said, 'Come back.' Would I have come back? Something tells me no." It is a moment that shows him what the power of connection can do.

Things have changed in the area over the last few years. There are still 400 businesses and offices in the Griggs Midway set of buildings (1821 and 540). But now there are also many new apartment complexes along that stretch of University Avenue - a few can be seen from the expansive deck in front of the new Rafiki Coffee & Cafe at 540 Fairview Ave N Suite 101. (Parking is available in the lot on the north side of the 540 building, as well as the main lot near University.)

Rafiki is the Swahili word for friend,



Rafiki Coffee & Cafe owner Ian Oundo recommends trying the African Tea. The black tea is from Kenya and it is seasoned with the East African spices of cinnamon, cloves, ginger and cardamom. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

which ties into Oundo's mission to build a more resilient, flourishing, and connected community one coffee cup and conversation at a time.

"You want to help yourself? Help community," he said.

In addition to coffee, smoothies, tea, cider and hot chocolate, Rafiki offers muffins, bagels, East African sambusas and mandazi.

In response to customers asking, "Where is the food?" Rafiki added light lunch options in early May. They offer salads, soups, wraps, and sandwiches.

Oundo recommends trying the African Tea. The black tea is from Kenya and it is seasoned with the East African spices cinnamon, cloves, ginger, and cardamom.

## BLACK MEN CAN DO MORE THAN PLAY BASKETBALL

Oundo joins fellow BIPOC coffee shop owner Shaunie Grisby, who opened Flava Coffee at 623 University Ave. last summer. Seeing and supporting another BIPOC-owned business makes Oundo feel good. It shows that a Black woman can own a coffee shop. A Uganda-American like him can, too. Black men can do more than play basketball or football. They can own businesses and be doctors. "We can do this, too," stated Oundo. "The subtle ways of breaking down barriers are so important."

It is something he thinks about as he raises his children in a biracial family. "I've had so much joy in doing this because I've had the opportunity to show my sons a different side of me," said Oundo.

Diversity and equity are important to him, as well as acknowledging changes that need to happen, are happening, and were brought into a larger public spotlight in 2020. "George Floyd is the culmination of decades that have eroded community," he observed.

"George Floyd is another unfortunate example to say enough is enough." He pointed to the land bridge proposed in nearby Rondo to reconnect a community broken apart by the construction of Interstate 94. "There has to be a collective effort and value that says we have to stand for what is right. We need to come together to fix the problems."

## EVERYTHING STARTS AND ENDS WITH COMMUNITY

Oundo's father is from Uganda and his mother is from Kenya. He is the second oldest of nine children, and he grew up "very poor," he recalled. He spent his childhood in Uganda and then moved to Wichita, Kan. in 2003 to attend college, staying with a family who had worked as

RAFIKI >> 9

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The festival will feature a diverse lineup of talented Hmong musicians, playing traditional Hmong instruments such as the qeej, a type of bamboo pipe, and various types of raj, which are reed instruments. Expect to hear soulful ballads, upbeat dance tunes, and lively folk songs, all infused with the unique sounds and rhythms of the Hmong culture.

In addition to the live performances, there will be a vibrant arts market featuring Hmong-made crafts, textiles, and other handmade goods, as well as opportunities to learn more about Hmong history and culture through interactive exhibits.

And of course, no festival would be complete without delicious food! Sample some of the best Hmong and Southeast Asian cuisine, including savory meat and vegetable dishes, spicy soups, and sweet desserts, all prepared by local chefs and vendors.

The event is organized by the Hmong Cultural Center.

More at <https://www.hmongcc.org/>.

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*Rondo Center of Diverse Expressions (RCODE) is pleased to announce the 3rd Annual Juneteenth Observance on Monday, June 19th, 2023, at the Rondo Commemorative Plaza, 820 Concordia Avenue. Activities include entertainment, food trucks, and information for job applicants or those seeking additional information on skilled training opportunities starts at noon and ends at 5 pm. A formal Juneteenth observance and program featuring speakers, awards, and keynote address is from 3-4 p.m.*

*Dr. Marvin Dunn, Department Chair and Professor of Psychology Emeritus at Florida International University and Founder of the Dr. Marvin Dunn Academy for Community Education will deliver the keynote address. Dr. Dunn is one of the most forceful voices on race relations in the United States. He was a naval officer, commander, and founding Chair of the Department of Psychology at FIU. He is the author of five books, hundreds of newspaper lead stories and journal articles, producer of two documentary films, lecturer, husband, father and proud graduate of Morehouse College. His views on racial and ethnic relations in Florida and the U.S. have been widely published and broadcast on the major news outlets. Other speakers will be announced at the start of the program.*

*The entire community is invited to attend and this unique occasion and celebrate Juneteenth with family and friends and the City of St. Paul, especially those interested in gainful employment opportunities.*

**RAFIKI** >> from 7

missionaries in Uganda. "We are not millionaires, but we will give you something that can change your life," Oundo recalls them saying. He earned a bachelor's degree in business.

A Somali friend encouraged him to come to the Twin Cities, and offered him a room and help finding work.

Oundo is grateful for the opportunities others offered him. "I've been blessed," he said.

His work life has included time at Delta Air Lines, corporate jobs, and public policy advocacy. He began working with African Economic Development Solutions, located in the Griggs Midway Building, to organize the Little Africa Festival held annually on the first Saturday of August.

Rafiki is a family affair – although only two of the six children from his blended family are old enough to officially work there. The youngest ones "volunteer" their time – which includes cleaning the aquarium on the weekends. They all feel ownership of the cafe. "This is our livelihood," said Oundo. "There's a sense of belonging here." His daughter, Sydney, is 16 and has worked at other jobs, places where she wasn't allowed to sit down between customers. She notices the difference being cultivated at Rafiki.

Oundo is already planning an expansion. A 750-square-foot room next door will become overflow and be used for meetings and gatherings.

"Everything starts and ends with community," he stated, "whether you are empowering it or destroying it."

More at [www.rafikicoffeecafe.com](http://www.rafikicoffeecafe.com).

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## WHY THROW AWAY A HOUSE? >> from 1

The crew took off exterior stucco and the siding underneath it plus ceiling and floor, leaving the structural elements. The Wilsons donated a cherry-colored wood cabinet that had been in the enclosed porch, to Better Futures' ReUse Warehouse Store. Libby added, "We also love to come to the store. A dryer, a toilet, an old door...there's lots of stuff we've bought from there in our four or so years of living here."

Better Futures Minnesota at the ReUse Warehouse, 2620 Minnehaha Ave. in Minneapolis is among those trying to prevent and divert the construction waste stream through deconstruction, which serves reuse and recycling. Here's how people and systems can help decrease waste.

Like the Wilsons, most consumers know home deconstruction from the store perspective, finding used appliances, cabinetry, or vintage hardwood flooring matching their urban 1900s to 1950s floors. Jason Allen, Waste Diversion Project Manager at Better Futures, said huge, hand-hewn old growth timbers also go quickly. "The uglier it is, the more demand there is for it," Allen said. With work, these become fireplace mantels, furniture or art pieces.

### HOW DECONSTRUCTION WORKS, AND WHERE MATERIAL GOES

Deconstruction could mean anything from a "partial," such as a kitchen remodel or condo where the wood color doesn't fit the new owner's taste, to a "full deconstruction," an old house making way for something new. Deconstruction crews remove fixtures, cabinetry and appliances in the first pass. Flooring is removed, de-nailed and packaged on site. Good trim and built-ins are carefully removed. To access the structural lumber, plaster or dry-wall must come out, and that goes into a recycling dumpster along with wiring, siding and other parts to be sorted at a transfer station.

Better Futures' crews consist of men leaving incarceration participating in a two-year voluntary workforce development program. They earn 12 different certifications including OSHA 10 accident-prevention training. They cross-train



Diane Schray, a real estate agent with Real Estate Masters, shopped on April 28 at the ReUse Warehouse, scoring vintage fixtures for a client who recently bought a tudor-style house in Como neighborhood. The clerk remarked that they had just come in that day. (Photo by Margo Ashmore)

in the nonprofit's other business lines of lawn-and-snow, janitorial, and appliance recycling. Crews have a supervisor and at least two experienced members, plus one or two trainees.

The donation of the reusable materials gives some homeowners a tax benefit that helps to offset the labor cost of dismantling the room, house or small commercial structure. Some projects in Ramsey, Washington, or Hennepin County will qualify for a deconstruction grant of up to \$5,000 based on square footage of the home and tonnage of material reused.

There are no active landfills in Ramsey County, so careful decisions need to be made about where to send demolition waste from Saint Paul addresses. Ramsey County's Solid Waste Management Master Plan 2018-2038, directs that 75% of construction waste should be diverted from landfills to reuse and recycling. Hennepin County's Climate Action Plan, with a goal of 85% diversion, reports that only about



Mid-deconstruction work at the Wilson home, before and after. (Photos supplied by James Wilson)



30% of construction waste is diverted.

For a list of reuse businesses which includes building materials, go to RamseyRecycles.com/reuse. There is a growing list of building materials reuse businesses on this Hennepin County website: <https://www.hennepin.us/business/recycling-hazardous-waste/construction-demolition-waste> or this statewide resource <https://www.allforreuse.org/ecosystem-map>

In addition to ReUse Warehouse, Habitat for Humanity's ReStore at 2700 Minnehaha Ave. in Minneapolis accepts materials already removed by the homeowner or a contractor. They also carry furniture, paint, tools and smaller home improvement sundries. The proximity of the stores brings customers to both and presents a variety of goods. Habitat also has a ReStore in New Brighton at 510 County Road D West.

### FUTURE OF DECONSTRUCTION AND REUSE

Melissa Wenzel, the MPCA's Built Environment Sustainability Administrator,

has seen "movement, momentum, and more success stories" since joining this work in 2019. Ramsey and Washington County combined to offer deconstruction grants. Hennepin County has a similar program and Wenzel said two other metro counties have expressed significant interest in deconstruction projects and/or funding.

About policy and lawmaking, Wenzel said: "We're already seeing cities that have sustainability, climate resiliency, waste management, emergency response, workforce development, and other similar goals. They are adopting more 'sustainable built environment' practices. St. Louis Park requires those receiving 'green building' funding to meet certain requirements: <https://www.stlouisparkmn.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/23233/637902841408170000>.

"We're seeing more counties implement similar programs like Becker County's Waste Diversion and Reuse Program and (Duluth area) WLSSD's reuse program. Pope/Douglas and Dodge County's future waste/material management campuses will include a building material and/or household goods reuse area.

"MPCA has a request in the governor's budget to help fund similar programs at counties that do not currently have the financial means. We know there's a high demand for deconstruction and building material reuse. We will continue to work to support this growing sustainable system," Wenzel said. <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/documents/budget/2024-25-biennial-budget-books/governors-revised-march-pollution-control-agency.pdf>

What can residents do to discourage demolition waste? Wenzel says use the systems and services that already exist. "Demand for these services will help drive them. USE used building materials. Items donated are often higher quality and lower cost than new items. Plus, you will likely own something far more unique than what you can find at big-box stores." She hopes that cities and counties offer building material/tool/household goods swap days or donation days. "Definitely reach out to your local government contacts asking for these services. They WILL offer opportunities when enough people ask for them."

*Editor's note: Margo Ashmore is Better Futures Minnesota's Deconstruction Marketing and Business Development person, former owner of MSP Home Tour and former publisher of the Northeaster newspaper.*

## Chat with local gardener, plant sale organizer

The 4th Annual Plant Sale to Benefit the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center Food Shelf will be held on Saturday, June 3, 2023, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1138 Churchill St. Veggies, annuals and perennial seedlings are grown by host Alison Goetzman, and other local gardeners. Plants and seeds are pay-what-you-can, and no one will be turned away. All proceeds will be donated to the food shelf at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center with a goal to reach \$1,000 in donations.

Follow the event on Facebook to find out what plants will be in stock. <https://fb.me/e/1biZc5xmY>

### WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO SUPPORT THIS FOOD SHELF?

Alison Goetzman: In 2020, when I started this plant sale, I chose a food shelf as a beneficiary due to the innate connection of growing food and eating it. At the sale, people can select plants to grow food in their garden while the money they give supports local food security. I chose the food shelf at Hallie Q. Brown Community Center specifically because they offer a client-choice model and I want to support that. This was personally significant to me because when I was a kid, I grew up in a food insecure household. I grew up on food stamps and government cheese, and going to food shelves where there were no choices, you got what you did. Client-choice models did not exist when I was a kid. I believe that from a cul-



tural and dietary standpoint, being able to choose gives dignity to the community, and means less food is gone to waste when families can enjoy what they bring home.

### HOW MUCH HAVE YOU RAISED AT PAST SALES?

Previous sales have always wildly surpassed my expectations. Past sales raise between \$800-\$1,300. What I think is impressive is that most of the donations are small sums. The plants and seeds are pay-what-you-can, so it can be a great way to fill a small garden bed or a few pots on a deck and every penny given goes straight to Hallie Q. Brown. The sale itself has become a passion project. I grow most of the seedlings myself, taking over my basement and deck for a few months as well as winter sowing the native plants and perennials. Winter sowing is a process of starting seeds outside in the cold of winter in

plastic containers that act like mini-greenhouses. I've also been fortunate to receive in-kind donations of plants and seeds for the sale from generous gardeners and local businesses like Egg|Plant Urban Farm Supply and Highland Nursery, as well as the organization West Side Seed Library. Last year, we had a surprise donation the day of the sale of a few cases of lily bulbs from a local gardener! It really is a volunteer and community supported event.

### WHAT ARE SOME POPULAR PLANTS AT THE SALE?

The herbs and native plants are always very popular, and I've been trying to grow more of those for the plant sale. But overall, people love to grow whatever they can! It is a powerful feeling growing your own food! Most people who come live in the city and have small gardens in their backyard - or no backyard at all! So, they are looking for veggie plants that can easily grow in containers and small spaces.

### WHAT TIPS DO YOU HAVE FOR NEW GARDENERS?

Three things: start small, grow what you know you like to eat and give yourself grace if things don't work out!

There is a learning curve growing food, so I always recommend taking baby steps working towards the dream garden. Each year, you'll discover new plants, new growing techniques and perhaps enlarge your garden space bit by bit. Along the way, you'll find out how much garden you can manage. It's one thing to prepare a garden and sow the seeds, and an entirely different beast growing the plants over the few months we have and then harvesting. As gardeners, we do it all! Once you harvest, it's important that you'll actually eat what you'll grow, too! Growing new foods can be fun though, to learn about new flavors and new dishes. In the end, there will be gardening successes and there will be gardening failures, and I believe it's important to give yourself grace when gardening gets frustrating. Gardeners are also very supportive, so reaching out to other gardeners can help put the ups and downs in perspective.

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# Signs of SPRING

By PATRICIA OHMANS  
Frogtown Green

Spring has definitely sprung! This year, Frogtoowners are busier than ever, working to enhance our neighborhood's natural environment. Check out this spring roundup of happenings:

### MAKING OUR PARKS SPARKLE

On a frigid Earth Day, Frogtown Green welcomed 48 hardy volunteers to the annual Frogtown Park & Farm trash pickup. Despite a raw chill, these volunteers gathered up 50+ bags of recyclables and assorted trash, including liquor bottles, a microwave, a bicycle, car keys and three giant knives. Many thanks to these helpers, including members of Revontulet, the Minnesota Aurora fan club, and firefighters from Frogtown's Station 18.

### GETTING READY TO GROW

Gardening season has started! Frogtown Green carpenter extraordinaire Chris Stevens been rebuilding our community garden beds at Our Village (a 40-bed community space at Pierce Butler and Milton), using a special technique for hardening the new wooden boards to prevent rot. Our Village Garden beds are all spoken for by neighborhood residents, many of them Somali speakers. This year we will also get welcome help from a rotating crew of volunteer Ramsey County master gardeners.

### TENDING THE TREES

A new batch of giveaway trees will be growing roots in Frogtown Green's gravel bed nursery. Frogtown Green cultivates 50+ trees each summer, which our volunteer Tree Frogs plant in fall. This year we will be partnering with residents at Mt Airy homes, to increase tree canopy along Jackson Street. We've got shade and fruit trees available this year. For information



Firefighters from Frogtown's Station 18 lend a hand during the annual Frogtown Park & Farm trash pickup on Earth Day 2023. (Photo submitted)

on how to sign up for a free tree, check the Frogtown Green website, frogtowngreen.com

### CALLING URBAN BIRDERS

Join veteran birder and volunteer Kiki Sonnen for a guided bird walk at Frogtown Park & Farm. The Park's native plantings and shrubs are a magnet for migrating birds of all kinds, while the presence of small mammals attracts raptors, including hawks and eagles. See what you can spot! Bring binoculars if you have them. Family friendly, but please note that bird-watching requires quiet concentration.

### BUSTING BUCKTHORN

Frogtown Parks' Stewardship crew members take up their work tools again starting May 6, meeting every first and third Saturday of the month from 9 to 11 a.m. Last year, this hardworking bunch managed to win funds to install solar lights at the Park, while renovating some neglected raingardens. They also partnered with our pals at Great River Greening to eradicate buckthorn, and on June 3, will be co-hosting a native plants installation, to which all are invited.

*Frogtown Green is a volunteer-powered initiative to build green beauty in the Frogtown neighborhood. We plant trees, cultivate gardens and work toward a healthier environment. If you'd like to know more, our website is frogtowngreen.com and our phone is 651-757-5970.*

**Bird Walk at Frogtown Park and Farm**

*Saturday, May 20  
8am-10 am  
family-friendly*

Spot migrating birds with help from expert Kiki Sonnen, St Paul Audubon Society member.

Meet in the parking lot on the south side of Frogtown Farm, at Milton Ave. Binoculars provided but feel free to bring your own.

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## PEACE BUBBLES

BY MELVIN GILES  
peacebubbles@q.com



*"In every crisis there is a message. Crisis are nature's way of forcing change – breaking down old structures, shaking loose negative habits so that something new and better can take their place." Susan L. Taylor*

*"There is never a wrong time to do the right thing." Author unknown*

*"Although slavery may have been abolished, the crippling poison of racism still persists, and the struggle continues." Harry Belafonte*

Hello Monitor readers,

Happy May! Happy glorious month of May! The weather is finally warming up! The robins and geese are back; the daffodils, tulips, and other spring flowers are blooming; and the beautiful sites, symbols, and sounds of our coming summer are gracing us with hope of better days ahead. Our Minnesota lawmakers are passing laws that reflect We the People instead of We the Puritans Know Best.

Although, many of us are still in mourning or disbelief with certain societal behaviors and individual acts of dishonesty and shameful violence of all forms, I still carry hope and feel optimistic that things are changing in a positive direction and that the Arc of Justice is bending forward towards brighter and just days. Yes, I have my days of doubt and truly wish I could snap my fingers to make joyful changes happen in a flash or overnight, however, that's when I turn to family members and trusted friends for comfort and guidance. This month I turned to a dear soulmate from the 1980s to give me hope that indeed things are changing in a fresher, fairer, and open manner. Not a perfect manner, (which I don't desire), but instead in a healthy, creative, and just Be manner.

### WORDS FROM UILANI

*With so much hate, racism, and divisiveness in the world, I often feel that there is no hope that we as a people will create a different world where everyone belongs. To that end, as a Black woman and single mother of a young Black male, I am constantly looking around me for positive changes in the dominant culture's exclusionary narratives. That is why*

## BRIEFS

### LYNGBLOMSTEN WELCOMES COSMINA STRAIN AS HOUSING MANAGER

Lyngblomsten, a senior services non-profit serving older adults in the Twin Cities since 1906, recently welcomed Cosmina Strain as the new Housing Manager of The Heritage at Lyngblomsten. Located in the Como Park neighborhood of St. Paul, The Heritage at Lyngblomsten is an assisted living community for adults 55 and older.

For the past 17+ years, Strain has worked with older adults in various roles in assisted living communities and skilled nursing homes. "Although I have served in different roles in this field, my focus has always been on enriching the lives of older adults. I've always loved caring for and serving residents," she said. She was drawn to Lyngblomsten because of the "excellent care given to residents and tenants, the family-like atmosphere, and its great reputation."

As Housing Manager of The Heritage



# INTERGENERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE

*it was particularly surprising for me to see a Black man on the television series, "Farmer Wants a Wife." Although I rarely see Black men in a leading role on television or movies playing a vulnerable, romantic figure, especially in a role where he is kissing a White woman, there he was on primetime television! Ryan, a Black cowboy, looking for love.*

*As Black women, we know that the tender side of Black men exists, but to see it played out in living color for all to see is encouraging and important. We need more stories like this that show our commonalities, because we often see Black men in a negative light especially on the news. This may not seem like a huge thing but it is a huge step in the right direction.*

### MORE ON THE MINI-FOREST REVOLUTION

And, to continue the conversation on the Mini-Forest Revolution, I like to introduce a young Green Justice Champion, Piper W. I recently met Piper in a synchronistic way while working with others on a research project about the potential and possibilities for mini forests in the Midway area, in particularly for the Rondo, Frogtown, and Hamline/Midway communities. Please take in the wisdom and insightfulness of Piper.

*Hi, I'm Piper W. I'm 10 years old and I'm working on a project that can help with carbon control. My idea was to create a mini-forest using the Miyawaki forest method. What is the Miyawaki method? It is a way to help human made forests grow faster and take up less space. The method consists of the way you plant the seeds, the preparation of the soil, and how you care for the plants.*

*Why is this important? As days go by, global warming becomes a bigger threat to the planet and all those who live here. And, because we can't fix global warming in a day, we have to take baby steps. One of these steps we can take is to plant more trees, or in this case a whole forest.*

*I have spoken to many different people and heard many different ideas. I would love to hear more voices and more ideas from new people. If you would like to contact me and my team to help, please email mnubranforest-leauge@gmail.com. Thank you!*

The intergenerational knowledge of Uilani and Piper give me so much hope and inspiration to smile more, to say hello to strangers more, to take more deep breaths when needed, and to blow more peace bubbles. I end this May's column with the harmonious and compelling words of Piper:

at Lyngblomsten, Strain is responsible for overall administration and management of the community, which consists of 60 market-rate assisted living apartment units in studio, one-, and two-bedroom floor plans. "The Heritage at Lyngblomsten is a close-knit community with easy access to Lyngblomsten's skilled nursing care, including a transitional care unit. Plus, there are a variety of amenities that residents can engage with, such as spiritual care, arts and lifelong learning programming, and music opportunities," Strain said. "I'm proud to be a part of this wonderful family."

### MASTEL'S CHANGES HANDS

Mastel's Health Foods, a local, independently-owned health food store at 1526 Saint Clair Ave, is excited to announce that it will now be owned and operated by two of its current employees. After years of dedicated service to the store, general manager Lauren Gaffney and marketing manager Alina Hornfeldt have purchased the store from the founder, John Mastel. They are eager to continue providing the community with healthy, natural supplements and organic food options. The new owners will continue serving the community and provide a welcoming and educational environment for all customers.

### My Point of View By Piper W.

Ask yourself  
Who are you?  
Do you know?  
Do you need to know?  
But then who am I?  
Do I know?  
Do I need to know?

Who do you think I should be?  
Should I be a perfect little princess?  
I could sing then.  
Or should I be a nurse  
where a Man could lead first?  
I could be an actress,  
saved by a knight in shining armor.  
Or a Brave tower climber.

But what do I want to be?  
Because that matters right?  
Because I might want to be the knight and  
give that dragon a real fight  
Maybe that's what I want to be?  
Because that matters to me.

I realize now that

you are human  
and so am I.  
We can make mistakes  
and sometimes we'll lie.  
We're able to bring people down  
and bring them back up  
and sometimes that's why  
people misunderstand this stuff.

It's sad to say  
that some people wouldn't have it another  
way.  
And they would rather be in charge  
like an owl watching its prey,  
then swooping down silently in the night  
not day.

It hurts to know  
that some people feel anger towards  
women  
so  
I wrote this poem to enlighten you  
so you can see  
my point of view.

*May Peace Be In the Rondo, Frogtown,  
Hamline/Midway, Como, and Surrounding  
Communities...*

*May Peace Be In Our Homes & Commu-  
nities...*

*May Peace Prevail On Earth (MPPOE)!*



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Folks officially re-open the children's area at Rondo Community Library on April 25, 2023.

## Children's area transformed at library

Saint Paul Public Library (SPPL) celebrated the transformation of the children's area at Rondo Community Library (461 Dale St. N.) at a volunteer event and ribbon-cutting ceremony on April 25, 2023, through a partnership between PNC, SPPL and Heart of America.

The children's area at Rondo Community Library, one of SPPL's 13 library locations, was transformed to provide more opportunities for learning through play for all families and children ages 0-5. The refreshed space features new, interactive play elements, flexible furniture, and murals that center culturally specific elements that reflect and celebrate the neighborhood's historic African-American community and newer residents from across Africa.

The interactive murals for the area's columns were created by local artist Emma Eubanks. The murals highlight affirmations created by community organization and library partner, Network for the Development of Children of African Decent (NdCAD). The artist's joyful designs reflect the cultural diversity and nature in the city that children hear, see, and feel. Each mural also engages children and families in playful ways to encourage curiosity and invite interaction through reading,

counting, and singing.

The new children's area offers interactive play elements to create an engaging way for children and families to learn together. Playing is a critical way young children learn about the world around them, build social and emotional skills, and form relationships with others. SPPL seeks to provide high-quality play-based learning experiences for all young children and families.

This is the third partnership between PNC, SPPL and Heart of America, after transforming similar children's areas at Rice Street and Arlington Hills libraries over the past few years. The transformations are part of PNC Grow up Great®, a bilingual \$500 million, multi-year initiative to help prepare children from birth to age 5 for success in school and life. Heart of America transforms learning spaces, bridges the resource gap, and strengthens communities to give all students room to dream, discover and thrive. Over the past 25 years, Heart of America has worked towards education equity by renovating almost 1000 spaces in: classrooms, libraries, STEAM labs, college/career centers, school gymnasiums and community centers and more.

## HAMLIN HEADLINES

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## 'Northern Nights, Starry Skies' premieres at Hamline

Nearly 400 guests came out on March 3 to attend the Twin Cities premiere screenings of "Northern Nights, Starry Skies," a documentary produced by PBS North and Hamline's Center for Global Environmental Education (CGEE).

The documentary, described as a celebration of Minnesota's night sky, explores the way stars have been interpreted by different cultures through time and examines how humans are impacting their ability to connect with the cosmos.

"Our northern wilderness areas – the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, Voyageurs National Park, and Ontario's Quetico Provincial Park – together form the world's largest designated Dark Sky sanctuary, and the film and associated educational resources really bring to life those pristine night skies," said Executive Producer and CGEE Director Tracy Fredin.

The documentary features dazzling night-sky photography from co-producer

Travis Novitsky, who also provides a narrative thread that connects the documentary's multiple stories. These include a focus on the detrimental impacts of light pollution on human health and the environment. Solutions to those problems being enacted in Duluth are introduced by Starry Skies North co-founders Cynthia Lapp and Randy Larson and bird expert Laura Miller.

The documentary is part of a greater K-12 education initiative that examines the natural health and cultural heritage of the region. Content from the documentary is available to public schools to include in their curriculum. "All this work is designed to deepen people's appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural history and also motivate them to be better stewards of the environment," CGEE Assistant Director John Shepard said.

PBS North has released the program to state and national PBS affiliates, and it can be viewed online.

## Instructional crime scene prepares Hamline students for real-world forensic challenges

Few things would bring anyone out into a November snowstorm at 1 a.m., but on Nov. 16, more than a dozen Hamline forensic science students were called out to investigate a staged crime scene on campus.

The After Hours Crime Scene (AHCS) is a critical part of Dr. Jamie Spaulding's Crime Scene and Death Investigation course, as it channels the skills and practices student's have learned all semester into one realistic scenario.

"There are very, very few places that have students in the middle of the night out there actually doing the real world work, which is the only way I think I can appropriately train students to do this work," Spaulding said.

The AHCS, and Hamline's breadth of forensic science courses, are a bit of a rarity in the Midwest, as Hamline is the only Minnesota university with a forensic science major – and one of the few forensic programs in the Upper Midwest.

The coursework has attracted students to Hamline, such as Kate Kelley, an anthropology major seeking a forensic science certificate. Like most of her classmates, Kelley was nervous about the AHCS, which Spaulding told students would occur randomly and without warning – just like real-life crime calls.

"Waiting for the call was brutal, trying to fall asleep but not knowing how long you can sleep before you need to be up and on your A-game was nerve-wracking," said Kelley. "However, once that call came

in, it was clockwork."

When students arrived on-scene, snow and temperatures were dropping. They found a mannequin body in front of Old Main (complete with gunshot wounds), spent bullet casings, a handgun in the bushes and two teacher's assistants serving as "unreliable" witnesses. St. Paul Police and Hamline Public Safety personnel were also on-scene to lend additional realism.

For Sara Thisius, who has already accepted a position as a law enforcement officer for a local police department, the AHCS gives her insight and confidence as she starts her career.

"This experience has allowed me to understand the dynamics of a crime scene and how each person is responsible for ensuring forensic science's integrity," Thisius said.

Students who plan to pursue a lab career get a better understanding of how the evidence they will one-day examine is handled and collected.

Kelley, who is studying to become a forensic anthropologist, realized the benefits to her future career immediately.

"It was still very beneficial to learn the documentation and processing procedures that will most likely also extend into my, and many others, discipline," Kelley said. "Even if you plan to be in the lab and not in the field it is good to be able to understand what the field techs have gone through in order to understand their mindsets when submitting pieces of evidence for analysis."

## Hamline launches student internship support program

No student internships at Hamline University will go unpaid, thanks to a combined \$2.5 million in federal appropriations and donor gifts.

A \$1 million appropriation establishes Pipers to Professionals, and donors gave over \$1 million to secure the future of the program and sustain its momentum.

Together, these funding streams support living wage stipends that will enable interns to free themselves from part-time jobs and other commitments to focus their time and effort on their responsibilities and learning.

Over the past five years, Hamline students completed an average of 387 internships annually and only 37% were paid internships. Many students work two or more jobs while attending college and are deterred from participating in unpaid internships by the requirement to forfeit income. This is especially the case for many first-generation and financially-stressed students. Pipers to Professionals will work to level the playing field by removing hurdles many students are forced to navigate, such as food insecurity and other financial stressors, that hinder academic success.

## PLAN IT

### WORLD WITHOUT GENOCIDE GALA MAY 23

Tanya Gersh will speak about receiving hundreds of death threats from neo-Nazis at World Without Genocide's benefit gala on May 23, 2023.

Tanya Gersh, a Jewish real estate agent, was targeted by followers of The Daily Stormer, a far-right neo-Nazi online publication calling for the genocide of Jews. The site's founder, Andrew Anglin, incited his followers to harass Gersh, her husband, and their young son after accusing Gersh of extortion.

In April 2017, the Southern Poverty Law Center filed a lawsuit on Gersh's behalf against Anglin, alleging that he had intentionally inflicted emotional distress. In November 2017, a federal judge ruled that Anglin's harassment campaign was not protected as free speech and Anglin was ordered to pay \$14 million in compensatory and punitive damages.

Registration for the gala, to be held in Edina, Minnesota, is open to the public at [www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/gershevent](http://www.worldwithoutgenocide.org/gershevent)

World Without Genocide at Mitchell Hamline School of Law promotes education and action to protect innocent people, prevent genocide, prosecute perpetrators, and remember those affected by genocide.

World Without Genocide is formally associated with the UN Department of Global Communications and is in Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council since 2022.

### ST. ANTHONY PARK ARTS FEST JUNE 1

St. Anthony Park Arts Festival will be on Saturday, June 1, 2019 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the St. Anthony Park Branch Library at Como and Carter Avenues in St. Paul. More at [www.sapfest.org](http://www.sapfest.org). Celebrating 54 years in St. Paul, the St. Anthony Park Arts Festival offers more than 70 juried artists offering pottery, jewelry, textiles, paintings, photography, printmaking, wood, and more. The festival also includes a used-book sale, a plant sale with offerings from the local Garden Club, art activities, food, and live music on the library lawn. Hosted by the St. Anthony Park Branch Library Association of the St. Paul Public Library as a benefit to support the library's summer reading and activity programs.

### SUPPORT WFNU DURING PLEDGE DRIVE JUNE 2

Tune in to WFNU Frogtown Community Radio at 94.1FM or [wfnu.org](http://wfnu.org) on Friday June 2, for a full day of live programming, with neighborhood interviews, new local music, ticket give-aways, swag and more. WFNU is a volunteer-run station, broadcasting 365 days a year, 24-7, with

local news, music and entertainment. "We need your financial support to help keep Frogtown tuned-in and keep us on-air!" say Katharine DeCelleand Philip Gracia. "Be a part of the WFNU Frogtown Community Radio family by joining us for our pledge-drive."

### LOW STRING MUSIC JUNE 16

A dynamic program of low string music presented by local musicians will be at Zion Lutheran Church (1697 Lafond Ave.) on June 16, 2023, 7 p.m. Performing will be Jason Wells on bass, Elise Butler-Pinkham on cello, Eric M.C. Gonzalez on cello, Aaron Kerr on cello and Olivia Quintanilla on cello. Works composed by local composers will be showcased with a premier of two new works by Leyna Papach and Daisy Swimmer. Admission to the concert is \$15 at the door. This is an all ages show.

### NEW PODCAST FOCUSES ON EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Little Moments Count Radio Podcast offers a collection of powerful audio stories on topics such as social and health justice and early childhood brain development. It is produced in partnership with community radio partners KRSM 98.9FM, AM950 Native Roots Radio, KMOJ 89.9FM and WFNU 94.1FM.

## TIDBITS

### TOM STREITZ NAMED INTERIM EX. DIRECTOR

Land Bank Twin Cities (2515 Wabash Ave.), a nonprofit organization that works to break barriers to equitable real estate development and provide investment opportunities for underserved communities across the Twin Cities, has appointed Thomas Streit as the Interim Executive Director. Streit was one of the original founders of Land Bank Twin Cities more than 13 years ago and most recently served as its Board Chair. Streit's appointment follows the retirement of Sandy Oakes, who served as President of Land Bank Twin Cities for 10 years.

Land Bank works with nonprofit developers like PPL, Aeon, and many others to produce thousands of affordable housing units throughout the Twin Cities metro area. The organization has also taken on cultural restoration and preservation projects, like the Victoria Theater in St. Paul. Since its founding, Land Bank has acquired and sold over 200 million dollars in real estate to service families, local businesses, and important cultural assets in low-income neighborhoods.



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# Elsa's House of Sleep founder: 'It's never too late to start dreaming'

By TESHA M. CHRISTENSEN

The words of Eritrean immigrant Elsa Rezene sparked the Dream Sequences pop-up public art gallery at the corner of 36th Ave. and East Lake Street.

She said, "It's never too late to start dreaming," recalled her son, Tetra Constantino, who took over running the business she started, Elsa's House of Sleep.

"That's the story of all of us on Lake Street as we rebuild," observed Howe resident Jack Becker during a community event on Sunday, Feb. 5, 2023. Becker, the retired founder of the nonprofit Forecast Public Art, curated and organized the outdoor art exhibit along E. Lake St. as part of his work with 36th A.R.T. (Avenue Revitalization & Transformation).

"What started out as an effort to mitigate blight along East Lake Street has become a creative celebration of a Black-owned business – Elsa's House of Sleep – working to reopen its doors and revitalize an important intersection in Southeast Minneapolis," he said. "It's also an opportunity to tell Elsa's inspiring story and demonstrate the ways in which artists and art can contribute to Lake Street's recovery and reawakening."

Becker added, "Thank you to the artists that made this project possible. This project was a labor of love and we got so much love back to us." The eight local artists featured in Dream Sequence are Ta-coumba T. Aiken, Christopher Harrison, Ron Brown, Katrina Knutson, Gordon Coons, Hawona Sullivan Janzen, Jordan M. Hamilton and Zarra TM. The work of everyone but Aiken was printed on panels that are attached to plywood on the fence and on the building. Aiken's original canvas is on display.

Becker wanted to do something about the "blighted property" at E. Lake and 36th, so he researched who the property owner was, and then drove over to meet



Elsa's House of Sleep owner Tetra Constantino said, "I want to thank everyone for supporting our vision." He hopes to reopen the second location for Elsa's House of Sleep at E. Lake Street and 36th this summer. More photos online. (Photo by Tesha M. Christensen)

Tetra Constantino at his University Ave. store. He wasn't sure how the request was going to come across – and recalls being delighted by Constantino's enthusiasm for the idea and his desire to participate. And when Becker called his friend of 55 years, artist Ta-coumba T. Aiken, he discovered Aiken had known Elsa Rezene and had a painting rolled up in his storeroom that was created 26 years ago in partnership with her. It was created with children who are now 27-37 years old. Aiken added the black lines through the drawings done by the children.

"You'll see some things are right side up and some are upside down because that is how we are," observed Aiken.

## HISTORY OF ELSA'S HOUSE OF SLEEP

When the Green Line light rail project was being planned, Elsa's House of Sleep at 1441 University Ave. W. looked like it was going to lose all of its parking. Constantino began looking around for a place to move. One evening, he found himself in front of 3540 E. Lake St. He recalled that his mother had always said how much she loved Lake Street, and that her first location was in the area. Rezene died in 2004, three years after Constantino had taken over running the store when he was 22. He decided to purchase the building and open up a second location. In the meantime, he lobbied his then-council member Russ Stark, and eventually the

## Female, immigrant business owner inspires outdoor pop-up art exhibit in Minneapolis

city purchased the lots at 1419 and 1427 University Ave. to create a parking lot that customers of neighboring businesses could use. The Minneapolis store officially closed in 2019, but they continued to use the E. Lake St. building for storage and clearance sales, with plans to fix it up. Then the Uprising happened.

The building wasn't damaged then, but was later that year. Constantino is working with the Minneapolis Foundation to help fund the renovation, which will be a complete redo of the building constructed in 1922. Elsa's House of Sleep will then reopen, and there will be space for two other businesses off 36th. He hopes to reopen in August 2023.

"I'm looking forward to what it's going to be," observed his wife, Nnecka Constantino.

"I thank everyone for supporting our vision," said Constantino. He pointed out that the people who work at Elsa's reflect the community.

"Thank you for doing this," three attendees told Constantino as the event on Feb. 5 concluded. They live in the neighborhood. "We appreciate it."

"After the uprising, it is beautiful to see something come from the messy change that was left behind," said Whittier artist Zarra TM, whose artwork adorns panels on the east side of the building.

"I hope people feel excited walking through the neighborhood. I hope people feel inspired. There's a lot of empty buildings, and there's so much that can be done in this area. Come see art. It's great."

# Updated bike plan focuses on separated bike lanes

By JANE McCLURE

More separated bikeways, better winter maintenance, and completion of the citywide Grand Round in area neighborhoods are among priorities for the latest draft version of St. Paul's Bicycle Plan. And for those who have waited for many years for a connection from Ayd Mill Road to the Minneapolis Greenway, that's in the plan, too.

The draft plan, which was released in mid-April, is out for a final round of public input before it goes to the St. Paul City Council for approval this summer. An online presentation on the plan was hosted in April by the St. Paul Department of Public Works.

Jimmy Shoemaker, a senior planner in public works, is leading plan efforts. He calls the draft plan a "significant update" from the current 2015 bike plan. Since 2015, bike facilities have been added throughout the city, usually in conjunction with street construction or mill and overlay projects. New development projects, such as Highland Bridge on the former Ford Motor Company plant site, and parks projects also provide opportunities to implement bike facilities.

"We use the bike plan all of the time, as we think about investing in our streets," said Shoemaker.

A big focus in the draft is on separated bikeways or bike paths. Separated bike paths are directly tied to demands for improved safety, which was raised in the first round of public engagement. Shoemaker said many more people would use city bike facilities if they had some kind of physical separation from motor vehicle traffic.

Separated bike paths given cyclists a comfortable space, said Shoemaker. "This was one of the top requests – the community wants them."

Different measures can be used to separate cyclists and motor vehicles, including bollards, raised curbs, taller barriers or raising the bike lane above the street surface. Bike trails can also be built beside a street. While those kind of separation are preferred by cyclists, Shoemaker cautions they can take longer to get built. There are also potential tradeoffs, such as loss of on-street parking, boulevard space and trees.

Community member also want to see slower motor vehicle traffic speeds on streets where they bike. Other requests are for improved street maintenance and repair, winter bikeway maintenance, better bike network connections, and more bike parking facilities.

In the current phase of community engagement, Shoemaker said there are efforts to reach out to BIPOC communities, and to the West Side neighborhood and neighborhoods east of downtown.

Shoemaker said that every route identified in 2015 was re-evaluated as part of the current draft plan. Several streets previously identified as candidates for on-street bike lanes or shared facilities are now suggested for separated lanes. Area streets recommended for changes including Hamline and Cleveland avenues.

Hamline, Como and Marshall Avenue east of Snelling are among plan priorities.

Another topic that must be explored is how to plan bike facilities along busy routes such as University Avenue.

The rail corridor proposal could draw on past plans for the Canadian Pacific Railroad spur in the West End and

Highland Park, and the CP Rail line leading from the north end of Ayd Mill Road through Midway to the old High Bridge railroad bridge over the Mississippi River.

The plan also calls for removing a few of the 2015 plan recommendations. Shoemaker said some routes are removed because other routes are nearby.

In other cases, property acquisition would be a long and complicated process. Fuller Avenue, which as once seen as a potential east-west bike route, was removed because of uncertainties about property acquisition. So was extending Pierce Butler Route to Pennsylvania Avenue. Longtime residents may remember when Pierce Butler Route was eyed for expansion to eventually connect to Phalen Boulevard.

The city's first Bicycle Plan took shape between 2011-2014, and was adopted by the city council in 2015. The plan was updated in 2017 to add the Capital City Bikeway and update work on the Grand Round, which is a citywide network of bike and pedestrian facilities. Shoemaker said that since the plan was adopted eight years ago, more than 60 miles of bike facilities have been added.

Community engagement on plan updates began in 2021. Comments were incorporated into the new draft plan. The city received almost 1,700 survey responses during the first phase of engagement.

St. Paul has four types of bicycle facilities. Shared lanes are streets marked with "share the road" signs. A local example is Prior Avenue south of Marshall Avenue.

Bicycle boulevards are streets with low motorized traffic volumes and speeds, designated and designed to give bicycle travel priority. Charles Avenue and Griggs Street are area examples of bike boulevards.

## SUMMIT AVENUE BIKE TRAILS

Save Our Streets (SOS) opposes the city's plan to install a separated bike trail along Summit Ave.

Ramsey County District Court Judge Patrick Diamond recently ruled in favor of SOS, which filed a motion with the court after the city failed to provide information from a data request for 10 months. Judge Diamond appointed a Compliance Facilitator to supervise the City of Saint Paul after hearings held on April 12 and again on April 27 demonstrated that the city was in violation of Minnesota Law (Minnesota Government Data Practices Act). Diamond appointed Ken Peterson, a board member of Clean Elections Minnesota, as a compliance facilitator, gave the city two weeks to come into compliance, and asked Peterson to report back to him on May 18.

The proposed bike trail for Summit Avenue is being discussed at these upcoming meetings:

- Public hearing May 24 at 5:30 p.m.
- City council vote on May 30.

Save Our Street is a citizen group that seeks to educate and advocate for the preservation of the historic streetscape of Summit Avenue as a treasured St. Paul destination and a safe, tree-lined, multi-modal corridor for generations to come. More at [SaveSummitAvenue.org](http://SaveSummitAvenue.org).

Bike lanes are lanes striped on many streets include Cleveland and Summit avenues. St. Paul's newest separated bikeways, with bikes placed along a street, are in the Capital City Bikeway.



# Would 'infill housing' provide 'missing middle' housing?

## Planning commission considers changes to allow accessory dwelling units, backyard housings and new 2 to 4-unit buildings

By JANE McCLURE

How should St. Paul add dwelling units in the midst of a housing crisis? Could that be in the form of accessory dwelling units, backyard houses and new two- to four-unit buildings? Could larger houses be subdivided?

A proposal to add more infill housing citywide is drawing sharply mixed reactions. Proponents say changes would add needed housing and density. Opponents counter that the city risks damaging neighborhood character and could wipe out single-family neighborhoods. The commission's Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee is reviewing more than 250 pages of public comments, and testimony from 16 people at an April 14, 2023 hearing.

The study recommendations, if adopted, would allow for infill smaller multi-family units. It would be easier to add accessory dwelling units (ADUs), cluster developments and tiny houses. A focus is on adding density described as "neighborhood-scale housing." These are the so-called "missing middle" units between single-family dwellings and large apartment buildings.

The City Council called for the study in a 2018 resolution. It is also called for in the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. The first phase of the study was adopted last

year. How people choose to live, such as in multi-generational homes, is one factor. So is the growing challenge of housing affordability.

Once approved by the Planning Commission, the zoning code changes would go to the City Council for a public hearing in mid-summer, with approval by fall.

Comments on the 163-page study ran the gamut. A wide range of housing, sustainability and development organizations chimed in in support. But many citizens are in opposition, mainly based on concerns about impacts on single-family neighborhoods.

Others who oppose the study and its recommendations said the city is trying to eliminate single-family neighborhoods, by making several technical changes to zoning categories. Former City Council Member Tom Dimond called the proposal "a ban on single-family housing, on single-family neighborhoods." Dimond said residents need more of a say if entire swaths of St. Paul will be rezoned without property owner consent.

"It's labeled as a study... I don't think people appreciate what a massive change this will be," said Summit Avenue resident Tom Darling. Darling, Dimond and others said the study needs more public notice and scrutiny before it moves on.

Planning Director Luis Pereira challenged those concerns, saying that single-family homes will still be allowed. The intent is to allow a greater diversity of neighborhood-scale and missing middle housing options in districts currently zoned exclusively for single-family homes (RL-R4), as well as in zoning districts that allow duplexes, triplexes and townhomes.

Pereira said the proposed new zoning districts that would be adopted would not make single-family homes nonconform-

“

Please help the small developers in this city.”

Jeff Chermak

“

I don't think people understand what a massive change this will be.”

Tom Darling

ing or illegal, but would allow more options.

Another part of the study allows for conversion of larger single-family homes into multi-family dwellings. While that was applauded by some, others recalled the poorly done post-World War II housing conversions that took decades to undo.

Some supporters added caveats to their comments. Having design guidelines and/or paying more attention to neighborhood character

was a request from several area groups.

The commission also heard from several small developers and landlords, who said the proposed changes could help them add smaller-scale multi-family housing. Desnoyer Park resident and developer Jeff Chermak said the proposed rezoning changes would help him build small multi-family buildings on properties he owns. "Please help the small developers in this city," Chermak said.

Midway homeowner and Summit-University duplex landlord Barb Allen said she could easily add a third unit in her existing duplex and an ADU on the garage, without displacing existing renters.

But one barrier developers cited is costs, even for smaller-scale multi-family housing. Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity is among nonprofit developers struggling to find affordable lots to build housing on in St. Paul. The Metropolitan Consortium for Community asked that the city consider waiving fees and providing grants for developers of "missing middle" housing.

Supporters said the study as proposed would provide more badly needed housing. Luke Hanson, co-chair of the advocacy group Sustain St. Paul, said the ability to add housing would also have property tax base benefits. Sustain St. Paul is urging the Planning Commission to consider changes that would encourage more density around neighborhood nodes and transit stops.

Some of those who weighed in asked the Planning Commission to consider unintended consequences. Macalester-Groveland resident Gaius Nelson is an architect and former Planning Commission member. While he agrees with the need for more housing options, Nelson cautioned commissioners to not conflate the issues of new housing and affordable housing. "Just because you build new housing doesn't mean it will be affordable," he said.

Nelson recalled the issue of smaller, affordable starter homes being torn down in Highland and Macalester-Groveland. Residents had to push for design guidelines to keep new dwellings from being built lot line to lot line, towering over existing homes, blocking natural light and causing water runoff problems. He suggested a number of technical changes to the proposed regulations, and urged the commission to look at impacts on a surrounding neighborhood when infill housing is built.



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## Pick up trash, weed local gardens

### DISTRICT 10 COMO COMMUNITY COUNCIL

BY SHEVEK MCKEE  
Executive director  
district10@  
district10comopark.org



THANK YOU to everyone who showed up to last month's Como Park Cleanup event. We counted 142 amazing volunteers, including 33 from the Twin Cities German Immersion School, that's huge!

We're planning our first 2023 Lake Cleanup for Tuesday, May 23, 5-8 pm. These events, in partnership with the Capitol Region Watershed District, focus on the shoreline and Lake Como itself.

#### 2023 Lake Cleanup dates:

- Tuesday, May 23 – 5-8 p.m.
- Saturday, June 17 – 9 a.m.-Noon
- Tuesday, July 25 – 5-8p.m.
- Saturday, Sept. 23 – 9 a.m.-Noon

District 10 provides trash-grabbers, rakes, buckets, nets, trash bags, and nitrile gloves for those who need them. Or, feel free to provide your own gear. Registration (before May 22) is not required, but it helps us plan and communicate if changes come up.

#### MIDWAY PARKWAY GARDENS SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

Please join us this summer for planting, weeding and community building.

**Hamline and Midway Parkway:** Wednesday, May 24 at 5 p.m. Group weeds: 2nd Wednesday of June 14 and July 12 at 5 p.m.; 4th Wednesday of June 28 and July 26 at 7 p.m. Questions: Con-

tact Molly O'Rourke at mollyfo.rouke@outlook.com

**Arona and Midway Parkway:** Spring plant & weed: Saturday, June 3 at 10 a.m.-noon. Group weeds: 2nd Wednesday June 14 and July 12 at 7 p.m.; 4th Saturday June 24 and July 22 at 10 a.m. Questions: Contact Jennifer Victor-Larsen at jennifer@larsentag.com

#### COMO HOMO HANGOUT - JUNE 25, NOON-4PM

The Como Community Council will be hosting the 2nd annual Como Homo LGBTQ+ Pride event at the Como Pavilion We will have at least one activity to help out with socialization, and an activity or two for the kids. Spread the word. Everyone is invited to this free event!

For the past three years, the Como Community Council has hosted the Como Homo Pride event at the Como Pavilion Lakeside. While the Council is more than happy to help organize the event, we're always looking for LGBTQ+ neigh-

bors who want to plan events, pageants, community building activities and food. Contact organizer@district10comopark.org if you're interested.

#### ANNUAL ICE CREAM SOCIAL - JULY 14, 5:30-8PM

Every year, the D10 Neighborhood Relations Committee plans our Ice Cream Social, typically featuring free ice cream, live music, meet-and-greets with neighborhood organizations, and activities for children and families. The event is at the Historic Streetcar Station in Como Park, 1224 Lexington Pkwy N. Because parking is limited, we encourage community members to walk, bike, roll, car-pool, or take public transportation. Bring your neighbors!

This event is still being planned. If you're interested in helping plan or volunteering at this event, fill out our volunteer interest form, come to our Neighborhood Relations Committee meetings (1st Tuesdays), or reach out to organizer@district10comopark.org.

## Como student learn about careers

### COMO PARK SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

BY ERIC ERICKSON  
Social studies teacher



Como students took advantage of the chance to visit with representatives from 30 different businesses, industries, and trade groups during school on Thursday, April 27. The fair featured many St. Paul employers who shared information and insight for future endeavors, and some who had immediate opportunities and internships.

A sample of the professional participants included Abogados Café, Delta Airlines, Construction Craft Laborers Union, Fairview Health Services, HealthPartners, Hiway Credit Union, Keystone Best Buy Teen Tech Center, Minnesota Department of Transportation, and Warners' Stellian.

#### ROBOTICS

A revamped Como robotics team had a wonderful season building their robot and bonding. Como's "BEASTBot 2855" returned to competition after a hiatus that began during distance learning due to COVID-19.

Team enthusiasm grew during after-school build sessions, culminating with participation in the 10,000 Lakes First Robotics Event at the University of Minnesota in April. Como placed 30th out of 51 teams, and won the Team Spirit Award which recognizes consistently positive attitudes and interactions with other teams, judges, sponsors, and event participants.

#### HISTORY DAY

Eleventh grade U.S. History students Paw Gay Say and Zariya Gameda won the first-place prize for their website at the St. Paul Regional History Day competition. Their project which focused on the impact of Anne Frank's Diary advanced to the Minnesota State History Day finals at the University of Minnesota.

While the girls didn't advance to nationals, they gained valuable life skills through their research. "Going to state made me nervous and confident at the same time," Gameda said. "Nervous because it was my first time participating in a big event. And it made me confident because I discovered that I can do something challenging and put my skills and knowledge to the test."

#### AP EXAMS



Students discovered and explored potential opportunities at the Como Career and Trade Fair in the Como Gym on April 27. (Photo by Eric Erickson)

After a year of rigorous college-level learning, Como students in Advanced Placement (AP) courses are taking AP Exams for subject-specific courses from May 1-12. Collectively, Como students are taking hundreds of exams covering content from 15 different courses with a goal of showing what they know and potentially earning college credit.

#### PROM

After the AP Exams are complete, Como Park juniors and seniors will celebrate the 2023 Prom on Friday night, May 12 at the Landmark Center in downtown St. Paul. This year's theme is a Masquerade Ball.

#### SPRING CONCERTS

The Como band will perform a spring concert in the Como Auditorium on Thursday, May 18 at 7 p.m. The Como choirs will present a variety of styles and selections for their spring concert in the Como Auditorium on Friday, May 26 at 6 p.m.

#### GRADUATION

The commencement ceremony for the Como class of 2023 will take place in downtown St. Paul inside Roy Wilkins Auditorium on Tuesday, June 13 at 8 p.m. The final day of school for 9th, 10th and 11th graders is June 14. Staff will close out the academic year on June 15.



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 We are an equal opportunity employer that embraces and values diversity and seeks to recruit, promote and retain employees that reflect the community we serve.

**WE'RE HIRING**  
**Watershed Data Specialist**  
 Applications due May 24, 2023 | Salary range \$55,727-\$83,650  
**Job Description:** Perform skilled to highly skilled duties related to water data management and analysis. The Specialist will lead the management, maintenance, and operation of several District data collection and assessment programs including but not limited to Kister's WISKI. Special emphasis will be placed on completing data analysis across multiple areas of District work that provides the link between raw data collected and the questions/needs of organization/partners. This position will also assist with implementation of small to midsized projects identified in the Watershed Management Plan.  
**Need:** Bachelor of Science degree or equivalent is required.  
**Benefits:** Generous benefits including 11 paid holidays, considerable paid time off, and flexibility for periodic remote work.  
 For a full job description and application details, visit [www.capitolregionwd.org/careers](http://www.capitolregionwd.org/careers)  
**Capitol Region Watershed District**  
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Get the word out. GET A CLASSIFIED. Just \$1/word.

Want ads must be received by the Monitor by Friday, May 26 for the June 8 issue. Call 651-917-4183 or email Denis@MonitorSaintPaul.com for more information. Your classified ad will also be automatically placed on the Monitor's website at [www.MonitorSaintPaul.com](http://www.MonitorSaintPaul.com). Contact Sandra to place a Help Wanted ad at 612-260-7967, [sandra.tmcpub@gmail.com](mailto:sandra.tmcpub@gmail.com).



# RISE & REMEMBER



GEORGE FLOYD GLOBAL MEMORIAL CELEBRATION

MAY 25-27, 2023

GEORGEFLOYDGLOBALMEMORIAL.ORG

JOIN US for our 3rd Annual, 3-day, Rise & Remember celebration.

**CANDLELIGHT VIGIL**  
MAY 25 | GEORGE FLOYD SQUARE  
FREE | 8 PM | Public Event | Minneapolis, MN

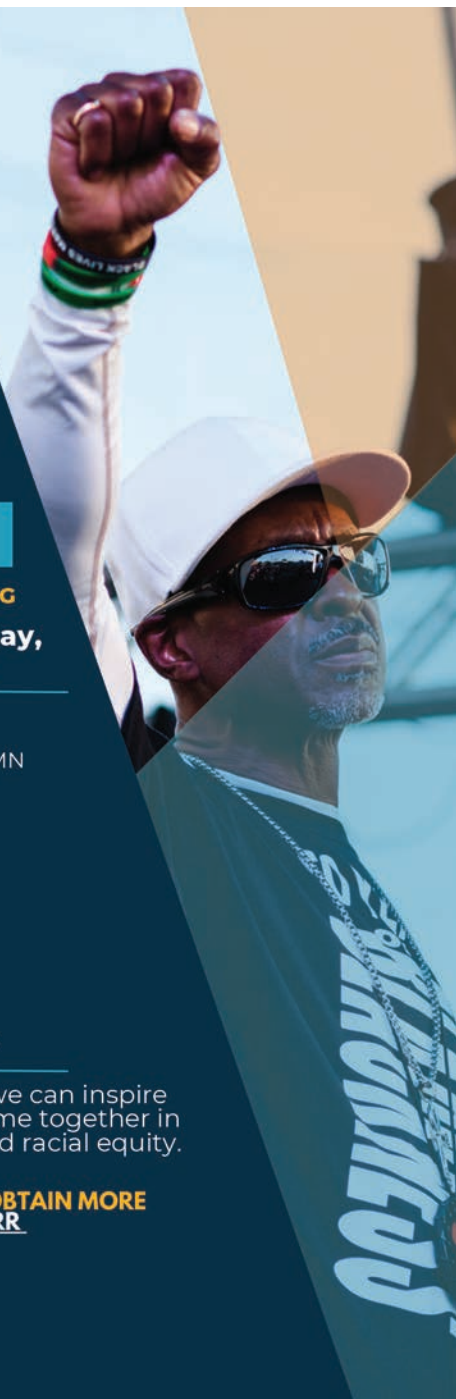
**UBUNTU CONFERENCE**  
MAY 25-26 | BEST BUY HQ  
Registration | Richfield, MN

**GFGM GALA**  
MAY 26 | PAISLEY PARK  
6 PM | Ticketed Event | Chanhassen, MN

**RISE & REMEMBER FESTIVAL**  
MAY 27 | GEORGE FLOYD SQUARE  
1 PM - 9 PM | Free Event | Minneapolis, MN

Our vision is through these efforts, we can inspire people to rise to the occasion and come together in community, pursue justice, and build racial equity. We hope to see you there!

TO REGISTER, VOLUNTEER, GIVE, AND OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION VISIT: [LINKTR.EE/GFGMRR](https://linktr.ee/gfgmrr)



## BOOK WITH PURPOSE

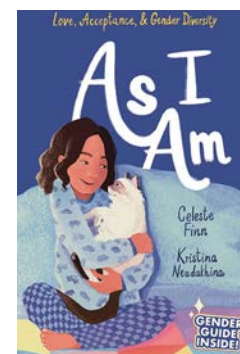
Rondo resident Celeste Finn has written "As I Am," a children's picture book notable for being one of the only children's picture books with a nonbinary protagonist. It was written to provide children with stories beyond the gender binary and includes a 24-page guide to help caregivers navigate conversations with children about gender. "As I Am" was written and then funded through Kickstarter. Profits will go towards nurturing gender-affirming early childhood classrooms and donating books to schools and libraries.

"Discussing gender with young children is critically important," observes Finn. "Gender rules are adopted by children when they are three, four and five, and studies show gender discrimination begins in preschool. Rigid gender expectations peak when children are five and children begin enforcing gender expectations onto each other; this makes authentic gender expression dangerous for some and toxic for many children in most early childhood settings. Gender beliefs adopted in childhood continue to inform beliefs as children become adults, causing transphobia, sexism, and other forms of gender oppression to continue into the next generation".

"As I Am" makes conversations about gender accessible and meaningful to caregivers and children while providing greater diversity of gender representation in children's picture books.

Finn said, "Picture books are some of the most impactful stories told in society. They are powerful tools for building community. Stories shape a child's identity, worldview, and sense of belonging. I hope that we can nurture more affirming, accepting, and loving communities by offering more diverse stories to children."

Finn hopes to help families and educators by providing this heartwarming



Rondo resident Celeste Finn published a children's book aimed at nurturing safe, gender-affirming communities. The book is titled, "As I Am," and includes a 24-page guide to help caregivers navigate conversations.

story about belonging to nurture gender-affirming communities. As I Am was published on Dec. 9, 2022. Learn more at: [www.asiamstory.com](http://www.asiamstory.com).

Finn has her Master of Arts in Teaching and has been an educator for 14 years. She has taught in places as varied as a roadless village in Nepal, a sprawling international school in China, and a preschool on Harvard's campus. Finn's work as an educator is rooted in the belief that education is the most effective catalyst for evolutionary change, and that early childhood education is the most critically important education people ever receive. To that end, she believes anti-bias and anti-racist practices are essential to every classroom. Finn is also founder of Big Wonder, an early childhood center that will open in Saint Paul.



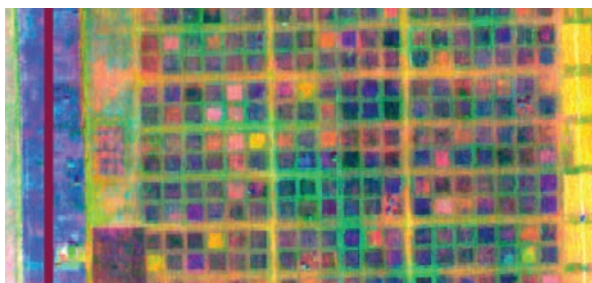
## Spend Summer at the Bell Museum



### Open Birding

May 20, 10-11 am

Join the birding fun on the Bell Museum's Learning Landscape! This short guided experience welcomes all experience levels, especially those who are new to bird-watching! Binoculars are available for check-out, and the group will remain on the flat, paved sidewalk just outside of the museum.



### Spotlight Science: Seeing Plant Biodiversity

May 20, 10 am-2 pm

Join us at the Bell and meet researchers at the University of Minnesota and University of Wisconsin-Madison working together to study plant biodiversity across scales in a time of rapid environmental change. Check-out demonstrations of their high-tech tools and research techniques in action.



### Native Skywatchers - Kapemni Dance

May 20, 2-2:30pm and 3-3:30pm

Join us for a storytelling motion media dance performance featuring D(L)akota and Ojibwe Indigenous astronomy with immersive, experiential, interactive animation projection art, and sky and Earth soundscapes. The performance explores the D(L)akota teaching Kapemni, which translates "As it is above, it is below" (trans. Albert White Hat Sr.).